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Western Corporations and Colombian Labor: Cycles of Transhistorical Colonial and Economic Oppression in Colombia

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**Western Corporations and Colombian Labor: Cycles of
Transhistorical Colonial and Economic Oppression in Colombia**

Fall 2022

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International Studies Global Affairs Track

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Abstract

The relationship between colonial and colonized nations is entrenched in modern politics and history; remaining a transhistorical site of economic, social, and political imbalance. The United States and Colombia have a trans-colonial relationship that is shadowed by colonial gains at the expense of colonized livelihood. Western corporations mimic the patterns of the governments that preside over them, using the land and labor of the colonized “Other” to maximize profit. I investigate postcolonial Colombia through the lens of the transhistorical United Fruit Company and the mass corporation Coca-Cola. The accountability of these corporations and the systems that have allowed them to maintain power remain uncontended, which I believe must change in order to end cycles of subjugation. American corporations and the United States government have held Colombia in a chokehold since the origin of colonialism, creating a disillusioned economy that finds itself catering to the United States at the expense of Colombian bodies. The United Fruit Company and Coca-Cola serve as case studies that prove that labor exploitation emerges as a result of the cycle of oppression that began with imperial naval expeditions in Spain. Colombian laborers are made disposable by the transhistorical functions of colonialism that refuse to humanize the non-western Other. I call attention to the importance of breaking cycles of repression that began with invasion and settlement. Until the companies and systems that created these uneven power structures acknowledge their responsibility, colonization will be allowed to self-disguise in the name of capitalism and human hierarchy.

Keywords: postcolonialism, interventionism, Colombia, United States, United Fruit Company, Coca-Cola, economic independence, workers' rights.

Introduction

The entanglement of dependence and independence between the United States and Colombia is a site of deep excavation.¹ U.S. Interventionism is disillusioned colonialism that is disguised by international policy, aid, military operations, and the deployment of western corporations within the country.² Equipped with the knowledge of the colonial power dynamics that lurk beneath the surface of the Colombian collective subconscious, I argue that western corporations and their economic exploits in the country become complex sites of re-colonization and oppression, proving that transhistorical colonization remains intact. Companies like the transhistorical United Fruit Company and Coca-Cola are sites of study that demonstrate non-military but economic colonization, where worker rights and economic independence become sites of violation and manifestations of physical violence.³

Western corporations have a long and dark history in Colombia and are responsible for many crimes against humanity that have been committed within the country.⁴ The colonial history of Colombia must first be closely examined, as it leads to the modern clash between governments, corporations, and laborers, which is a site of much contention and violence.⁵ The imbalanced

¹ Quintero, Camilo. "Trading in Birds: Imperial Power, National Pride, and the Place of Nature in U.S.–Colombia Relations." *Isis* 102, no. 3 (2011): 421–45. <https://doi.org/10.1086/661592>.

² Falk, Richard. "The New Interventionism and the Third World." *Current History* 98, no. 631 (1999): 370–75. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45318378>.

³ Lazear, Edward P. "Economic Imperialism." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 115, no. 1 (2000): 99–146. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2586936>.

⁴ Higginbottom, Andy. "Solidarity Action Research as Methodology: The Crimes of the Powerful in Colombia." *Latin American Perspectives* 35, no. 5 (2008): 158–70. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27648126>.

⁵ SOWELL, DAVID. "COLOMBIAN POLITICAL CULTURE." In *The Early Colombian Labor Movement: Artisans and Politics in Bogota, 1832-1919*, 25–53. Temple University Press, 1992. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv941x49.7>.

relationship that emerges within contemporary postcolonial Colombia, therefore, rests much blame on western corporations and their disregard for the physical and economic rights of Colombian citizens.⁶

I first conduct an in-depth analysis of the colonial establishment of Colombian nationhood, with close attention paid to the ever-evolving role of the colonizer in shaping the modern nation-state. Similar to the majority of other colonized nation-states, the challenges of the post-independence era did not allow them to gain economic sovereignty.⁷ The case of Colombia and its relationship to large corporations such as The United Fruit Company and Coca-Cola is one case study. In the following pages I will present two cases: first, The United Fruit Company. I will describe the political and economic origins of the company and then analyze the atrocities it committed and its modern-day transition into Chiquita Inc. Second, Coca-Cola, I explore the ongoing crimes against humanity committed by this company and the ways it exploited Colombian laborers. Close attention will be paid to the relationship between The United Fruit Company Coca-Cola and the United States government.

I argue that the current postcolonial condition of dependency in Colombia is produced by a series of historical events shaped by imperialism, exploitation, and oppression, which creates a global power vacuum occupied by western interventionism. Western corporations, mainly the United Fruit Company and Coca-Cola, fill this vacuum as they occupy and invade Colombian economics, and exploit laborers to maximize profit and benefit their shareholders in the “Global North.”⁸ The

⁶ Chomsky, Aviva. “Globalization, Labor, and Violence in Colombia’s Banana Zone.” *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no. 72 (2007): 90–115. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27673094>.

⁷ SALDAÑA-PORTILLO, MARÍA JOSEFINA. “Cruel Coloniality; or, The Ruse of Sovereignty.” *PMLA* 131, no. 3 (2016): 722–30. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26158873>.

⁸ Scott, Sam. 2017. *Labour Exploitation and Work-Based Harm*. N.p.: Policy Press.

relationship between these corporations and Colombian laborers mimics a colonial model⁹ of oppressive disposability, in which Colombian bodies are seen as discardable due to the entanglement of western economic interests and the inherited colonial power that the United States possesses.

Literature Review

Literature on postcolonialism begins with the beginnings of Indian independence from Britain with the border partition of India and Pakistan.¹⁰ The violence that followed was a result of British border divisions and created a segway for an academic analysis of the long-term impacts of occupation.¹¹ Alfred Sauvy began to study what he called postcolonialism, which he claimed was the study of the effect of colonial rule on countries now deemed independent.¹² Generally, postcolonial theory presides under the assumption that colonialism is one of the most significant events to happen in world history.¹³ Postcolonial theory, then, studies the impact of colonialism on the world and the production of history and knowledge. In this thesis, I use postcolonial theory to closely examine the deployment of western corporations into postcolonial countries. Colombia can, with the use of postcolonial theory, be studied as a site of ongoing colonial oppression that emerges from a long colonial history. The use of capitalist corporations that emerge from a colonial power can serve

⁹ Brown, Mark. "Colonial States, Colonial Rule, Colonial Governmentalities: Implications for the Study of Historical State Crime." *State Crime Journal* 7, no. 2 (2018): 173–98. <https://doi.org/10.13169/statecrime.7.2.0173>.

¹⁰ BBC Staff. 2022. "Partition: Why was British India divided 75 years ago?" BBC. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-62467438>.

¹¹ De Juan, Alexander, and Jan H. Pierskalla. 2017. "The Comparative Politics of Colonialism and Its Legacies: An Introduction." *Politics & Society* 45 (2): 159-172. SAGE Journals.

¹² The Borgen Project. n.d. "Global South." The Borgen Project. Accessed October 14, 2022. <https://borgenproject.org/tag/global-south/>.

¹³ Olaniyan, Tejumola. 1993. "On "Post-Colonial Discourse": An Introduction." *Callaloo* 16, no. 4 (Autumn): 743-749. JSTOR.

postcolonial studies of the patterns and histories of repression and violation set by their governing predecessors as continued cycles of exploitation are observed.¹⁴

Postcolonial theory emerged from writings that appeared in the 1950s through the 1970s, with books such as *Black Skin, White Masks*, and the *Wretched of the Earth*, both by Franz Fanon. Also significant are Fidel Castro's *History Shall Absolve Me, The Colonizer and the Colonized* by Albert Memmi, *Orientalism* by Edward Said, *The Empire Writes Back* by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffins, and Helen Tiffin.

Franz Fanon's book *Black Skin, White Masks*, written in 1952, explores the role of race in cultural identity, which is shaped in a hegemonic society by colonial hierarchies of supremacy and dominance.¹⁵ Fanon, originally from the Martinique lived there before, during, and after colonial independence, but also served in the French military as a psychologist in Algeria and later joined the Algerian resistance to French colonialism. He was able to write a critique of the concept of an "after" from the perspective of someone who has lived through the transition from colonial to independent rule.¹⁶ He worked for the French during WWII and worked as a psychiatrist, where he studied the way that white people reacted to him, a Black man in a medical environment, and the quotidian.¹⁷ There is an entire chapter dedicated to the accommodation of the Other in white spaces,¹⁸ which is only

¹⁴ Wadie, Edward. n.d. "Postcolonialism." Accessed October 13, 2022.

<https://www.pearsonhighered.com/assets/samplechapter/0/2/0/5/0205791697.pdf>.

¹⁵ Fanon, Frantz. 2007. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Translated by Richard Philcox. N.p.: Grove Press.

¹⁶ Britannica. n.d. "Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty | United States-Panama [1903]." Britannica. Accessed September 12, 2022. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Hay-Bunau-Varilla-Treaty>.

¹⁷ Möhring, Manuel. 2017. "Glossary Entry: Black Skin, White Masks," Glossary Entry for University San Gullen. Edited by Carolin Schurr. University San Gullen.

¹⁸ Fanon, Frantz. 1952. "Black Skins, White Masks Chapter Five: The lived Experience Of The Black Man By Frantz Fanon." WordPress.com.

<https://politicsdrama.files.wordpress.com/2017/02/black-skins-white-masks-chapter-five.pdf>.

allowed when it is to the benefit of white spaces. The book is foundational to postcolonial studies because of its timely relevance, as it was published during an era of a mass surge in newly independent nation-states.¹⁹ Also notable is Fanon's text *The Wretched of the Earth*,²⁰ written in 1961, and provides a psychological analysis of the impact of colonialism on the psyche of the colonized. This book came after Albert Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, which argued that colonialism was so oppressive that it impacted the human brain in detrimental ways.²¹ Fanon writes of the inherent biases that colonialism has forced onto postcolonial bodies, and writes of new, independent government and identity-making, which he says are possible if decolonization is successful, "If we want to turn Africa into a new Europe, and America into a new Europe, then let us leave the destiny of our countries to Europeans. They will know how to do it better than the most gifted among us. (Fanon 2021, Conclusion)." Colonialism causes a burden on the psyche of the individual and community; therefore, postcolonialism has to use national imagination to heal these collective wounds.

Fidel Castro's 1953 speech *History Will Absolve Me*, later transcribed and published in 1975, can be interpreted as a fundamental postcolonial text as the speech is regarded as the beginning of the socialist revolution through the Global South.²² He categorized Cuban suffering as the responsibility of the colonial regime and the succeeding social hierarchy that remained in place after independence was

¹⁹ Office of the Historian. n.d. "Milestones: 1945–1952." Milestones: 1945–1952 - Office of the Historian. Accessed October 14, 2022. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/asia-and-africa>.

²⁰ Fanon, Frantz. 2021. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Translated by Richard Philcox. N.p.: Grove Press.

²¹ Tweedie, Dominic. n.d. "Chapter 6: Conclusion." *The Wretched of the Earth* by Frantz Fanon. Accessed October 13, 2022. <https://www.marxists.org/subject/africa/fanon/conclusion.htm>.

²² Carroll, Rory, and Jonathan Watts. 2016. "Castro's legacy: how the revolutionary inspired and appalled the world." *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/26/fidel-castro-legacy>.

established.²³ Notably, in his speech Castro mentions the importance of “people” over “class,” which is a clear shift away from the colonial worldview, an echo of Fanon’s concluding statement on postcolonial futurism.²⁴

Albert Memmi was a French-Tunisian Jewish²⁵ man who took the pre-existing academic genre “third-world studies,” established by Sauvy, and applied them to the social order of colonial countries, addressing the inherent privileges that colonizer bodies have over the colonized. Memmi observed the power of language as a tool of colonization. He demonstrated the ways Jewish Tunisians would learn French to claim or possess superiority over Muslim Tunisians.²⁶ The text is deeply concerned with the effect of colonialism on the colonized mind, he later wrote the preface for the book that is considered the catalyst of the Civil Rights Movement, *The Fire Next Time* by James Baldwin.²⁷ Memmi analyzed the inherent state of the colonizer that Europeans in Tunisia possessed even if they were poor, impoverished or low-ranking within their communities. He wrote in 1957:

The colonial does not exist, because it is not up to the European in the colonies to remain a colonial, even if they had so intended. Whether the European expressly wishes it or not, he is received as a privileged person by the institutions, customs and people. From the time he lands

²³ Forte, Maximilian C. 2013. “History Will Absolve Me: Sixty Years Later.” Zero Anthropology. <https://zeroanthropology.net/2013/10/16/history-will-absolve-me-sixty-years-later/>.

²⁴ Castro, Fidel. 1975. “History Will Absolve Me.” Marxists Internet Archive. <https://www.marxists.org/history/cuba/archive/castro/1953/10/16.htm>.

²⁵ Roberts, Sam. 2020. “Albert Memmi, a ‘Jewish Arab’ Intellectual, Dies at 99 (Published 2020).” The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/10/books/albert-memmi-a-jewish-arab-intellectual-dies-at-99.html>.

²⁶ Memmi, Albert. 2021. *The Albert Memmi Reader*. Edited by Michael Lejman and Jonathan Judaken. N.p.: Nebraska.

²⁷ Shatz, Adam. 2020. “Adam Shatz · On Albert Memmi · LRB 24 August 2020.” London Review of Books. <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v42/n16/adam-shatz/on-albert-memmi>.

or is born, he finds himself in a factual position which is common to all Europeans living in a colony, a position which turns him into a colonizer (Memmi 1991, 9).²⁸

This is crucial to postcolonialism as it concerns the role of responsibility. According to Memmi, and as this paper also explicitly assumes, to be a member of a colonial community is to be an oppressor.

Benefiting from systems of oppression is complicitness.²⁹ Postcolonialism, therefore, becomes the burden of not only politicians and corporations but also of the individual who is “perceived as privileged” despite their status within their clan.

Influenced by Fanon and Mammi, in 1979, Edward Said wrote the novel *Orientalism*, laying an academic groundwork for questioning the hierarchical structure of colonial society. Said was a Palestinian-American academic who was born in Jerusalem before the formation of the state of Israel in the 1940s.³⁰ His academic work focused mainly on literature,³¹ and *Orientalism* became infrastructural to the anthropological understanding of the process of becoming and being Other, and how this is positioned against the non-existent yet ever-present west.³² Said argues that the west creates the Other to facilitate an unequal distribution of power between the two, forcing the identity of those deemed Other into contention as the west rewrites their identity, culture, and history to best fit

²⁸ Memmi, Albert. 1991. *The colonizer and the colonized*. Translated by Howard Greenfeld. N.p.: Beacon Press.

²⁹ Sartre, Jean-Paul. n.d. “The Colonizer and the Colonized Albert Memmi.” Squarespace. Accessed October 13, 2022.

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/589fa7aaa5790a7c3fba1f34/t/5aedff898a922d5e605957ff/1525546890470/Albert+Memmi-The+Colonizer+and+the+Colonized.pdf>.

³⁰ Heaney, Seamus. 2022. “Edward Said | American professor and literary critic.” Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Edward-Said>.

³¹ SAID, EDWARD, and Edward Wadie. 2014. “AN OUTLOOK ON POSTCOLONIALISM THROUGH THE ETHOS OF ORIENTALISM BY EDWARD SAID EDWARD SAİD’İN ŞARKİYATÇILIK ESERİ ÇERÇE.” DergiPark. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/321388>.

³² Ferguson, Niall. 2011. *Civilization: The West and the Rest*. N.p.: Penguin Publishing Group.

western narratives of Otherness.³³ This process is considered the process of becoming Other, where Otherness is forced upon the subject by the colonial, imperial, “western” subject. Said’s work on *Orientalism* established that postcolonialism is a process that is always affecting the colonized subject in one manner or another. Postcolonial theory, Said argued, had to be studied in the context of the manufacturing of identity and culture,³⁴ which are forced upon the colonized body in response to imperial wishes.

The final major contribution to the basis of postcolonial theory is the text *The Empire Writes Back* by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, which was published in 1989. This text generally analyzes the role of literature in postcolonialism and the importance of agency in postcolonial discourse.³⁵ Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin broadly define postcolonialism as “[to be] affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day” (Ashcroft, Tiffin, and Griffiths 2002, 2). Postcolonialism, then, is the essence of the nation that was colonized, of the subject that was once imperialized. It is also the cycle of oppression that emerges and re-configures itself to adapt to modern notions of human rights and justice; a pervasion of modernity to accommodate the exploits of the past. What was once colonized or once imperialized remains in a state of being colonized or imperialized; caught in the cycle of exploitation with no access to any sense of liberation or freedom from the oppressive nature of coloniality. Essentially, the bodies seen or made to be disposable under

³³ Osborne, Rachel. n.d. “Orientalism.” Academics. Accessed October 13, 2022. <https://academics.hamilton.edu/english/ggane/orientalism.html>.

³⁴ Said, Edward W., and Edward W. Said. 1994. *Orientalism*. N.p.: Vintage Books.

³⁵ Ashcroft, Bill, Helen Tiffin, and Gareth Griffiths. 2002. *The empire writes back: theory and practice in post-colonial literatures*. N.p.: Routledge.

colonial rule remain disposable in a postcolonial world; remain disenfranchised, exploited, and dehumanized. It is through this lens that dependency theory can exist.

Dependency theory is the preface of this thesis. Dependency theory stipulates that a country is underdeveloped because of the development of other, more historically powerful, nations.³⁶ Underdeveloped countries are economically dependent on developed countries; this becomes a replication of the colonial methods of power and control. The historically powerful nation will always have control over the historically disadvantaged colonized nation because the very same disadvantaged nation will never become powerful without the aid of the Other. Louis Perez observes that “the United States structurally influences economic growth in Latin America as a function of its national economic interests,” which infers that Latin America’s economic growth happens with the blessing of the United States (Perez 1990, 136). While some academics refer to this phenomenon as a poverty trap,³⁷ the phenomena must first and foremost be understood as a calculated weapon of control; an economic recolonization of the well-being and agency of Latin American nations. Per Molander writes in *The Anatomy of Inequality* that “[inequality] moves toward the level that the current stage of development allows” (Molander 2016, 26).³⁸ If development is understood as an umbrella term encompassing the institutions and governments considered developed, then it becomes clear that the state of underdevelopment around the world is under their control.

³⁶ Perez, Louis A. 1990. “Dependency.” *The Journal of American History* 77, no. 1 (June): 133-142. JSTOR.

³⁷ Duflo, Esther, and Abhijit Banerjee. 2012. *Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty*. N.p.: PublicAffairs.

³⁸ Molander, Per. 2016. *The Anatomy of Inequality: Its Social and Economic Origins--and Solutions*. N.p.: Melville House.

Arturo Escobar is a Colombian-American anthropologist whose literature on theories of development dictates that development was an invented concept constructed by those in power to be deployed as a weapon of domination over the world that the powerful deemed to be “developing” or trapped in an eternal state of development. Escobar studies theories of development as they emerge out of a post-colonial South America, and very specifically, out of Colombia. In this case, developing countries can never be allowed to become developed, as Escobar notes that:

Development proceeded by creating "abnormalities" (such as the "illiterate," the "undeveloped," the "malnourished," "small farmers," or "landless peasants"), which it would later treat and reform. New problems were progressively and selectively incorporated; once a problem was incorporated into the discourse, it had to be categorized and further specified (Escobar 1999, 384).³⁹

Escobar is arguing that the creation of problems that are legitimate but subsequently illegitimized by their recognition by the Global North allows for a constant cycle of re-occupation in countries without access to the umbrella term “development.” Escobar argues in his essay “The Invention of Development” that development must be understood as the essentialization of professionalism that emerged following World War II and involves the contextualization of the “third world into the politics of expert knowledge and Western science in general” (Escobar 1999, 385). Contextualizing legitimate issues of poverty through a postwar western lens allowed for the invention of development that

³⁹ Escobar, Arturo. “The Invention of Development.” *Current History* 98, no. 631 (1999): 382–86. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45318380>.

essentialized and illegitimized development in an industrialized context. In this same essay, Escobar writes of the measurements of success in development initiatives:

Development has been successful to the extent that it has been able to integrate, manage, and control countries and populations in increasingly detailed and encompassing ways. If it has failed to solve the basic problems of underdevelopment, it can be said - perhaps with greater pertinence - that it has succeeded in creating a type of underdevelopment that has been, for the most part, politically and technically manageable (Escobar 1999, 385).

Ultimately, development is a corrupt process of legitimizing poverty and subsequently de-legitimizing postcolonial suffering through finding a way for international political management and categorization of it. The invention of development functions as a mechanism for controlling and managing poverty. The distinction as development as something that had to be “invented” or legitimized by the west to be solved or absorbed into western notions of humanitarianism is, by definition, the problem with the inability to solve issues that emerge in a postcolonial world.⁴⁰

I utilize postcolonial and dependency theories to understand the role of western corporations in postcolonial society, especially concerning the Global South. Postcolonialism emerges as an ongoing process affecting the postcolonial subjects, especially in the context of laborers and their economic agency. Postcolonialism specifies that economic agency is created by and in response to the existence of the imperial network of power, and therefore is always emerging as a reaction to colonialism rather than despite it.

⁴⁰ Escobar, Arturo. “Anthropology and the Development Encounter: The Making and Marketing of Development Anthropology.” *American Ethnologist* 18, no. 4 (1991): 658–82.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/645446>.

Rather than examine labor rights and postcolonialism in Colombia through an evaluation of policy in the country, I will study the emergence of this phenomenon in Colombia based on postcolonial notions of development and agency and the impact on Colombian workers. This thesis diverges from pre-existing literature because it utilizes postcolonialism to explore the effect of western corporations' vandalism of the economies of the Global South, bridging postcolonialism with dependency theory to argue that the Roosevelt Corollary and the Monroe Doctrine were responsible for a power vacuum that companies like United Fruit Company and Coca-Cola were able to fill, thus perpetuating the cycle of oppression that began with the moment of colonization and is thus far, yet to end.

Colombia and the Colonial Sphere: 1499 to 1950

On the Importance of Historical Context

Historical context is essential to understanding the present, as the past always directly influences and informs the present. The past acts as a contextualizing agent that creates access to studying the constructions of culture and society in present-time. Colonial histories create postcolonial realities, and this relationship must be investigated to understand present injustices and their systemic nature.⁴¹ I will summarize the first records of human society in Colombia from the first-documented tribal nomadic groups to the European “discovery” and subsequent occupation of the country. I will then explore the creation of Colombian borders and the creation of an independent state after European liberation. Most importantly, I will examine the ways in which the United States slowly

⁴¹ Greene, Jack P. “Colonial History and National History: Reflections on a Continuing Problem.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 64, no. 2 (2007): 235–50. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4491615>.

re-colonized Colombia in the late 1800s as European colonization in the region began to weaken, and the mechanisms through which the United States occupied the Colombian postcolonial power vacuum before it could fully emerge.⁴² I will also summarize and analyze the emergence of U.S. interventionism in the early 1900s and its relevance to modern intergovernmental relations between the two countries.⁴³ Notably, the Monroe Doctrine and Roosevelt Corollary are listed as crucial markers of U.S. interventionism. I will refer back to the Roosevelt Corollary throughout the Case Studies.

Historical Background

1499-1819: Pre Monroe Doctrine

Before the European invasion of the western part of South America, many Indigenous tribes lived in the northwestern part of the continental region. Archaeologists reported that the first Mesoamericans traveled to Colombia in the year 1200 BCE, which marks the first known occupation and settlement on Colombian soil in human history.⁴⁴ The Mesoamericans are well-known for their discovery of corn cultivation, which later became one of the main South American food sources, culture, and agricultural production.⁴⁵ In 500 BCE, other Indigenous groups migrated from Mesoamerica to Colombia as tribal conflict drove them south.

⁴² Pels, Peter. "The Anthropology of Colonialism: Culture, History, and the Emergence of Western Governmentality." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 26 (1997): 163–83. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2952519>.

⁴³ Rosenbloom, David. "The Politics-Administration Dichotomy in U.S. Historical Context." *Public Administration Review* 68, no. 1 (2008): 57–60. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25145576>.

⁴⁴ Crow, John Armstrong. *The Epic of Latin America*. Berkeley : University of California Press, 1992. <http://archive.org/details/epicoflatinameri00crow>.

⁴⁵ MacNeish, Richard S. "Ancient Mesoamerican Civilization." *Science* 143, no. 3606 (1964): 531–37. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1713607>.

The Chibchas migrated to the region between 400 and 300 BCE, followed by the Arawaks, who came from modern-day Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay. The Arawaks were well-known for their celebration of warfare, and their war tactics forced the Chibchas to migrate to the highlands and mountainous regions of Colombia.⁴⁶ The Chibchas were known for their cultivation of salt, corn, and potatoes, as well as their advanced urban design, with transportation pathways set in stone. The indigenous fertilization of Colombian soil foreshadows a future of agricultural richness and subsequent exploitation in the region.

Imperialism, which can be considered the socioeconomic, cultural, and militant deployment of the theory of colonization, has an extensive history in the modern nation-state of Colombia.⁴⁷ The imperial history of Colombia begins in 1499 when Alonso de Ojeda⁴⁸ encountered what would later become the nation-state of Colombia. Alonso de Ojeda was a partner of Christopher Columbus and Amerigo Vespucci, although Columbus was not with Ojeda during his “discovery”, and notably never stepped foot in Colombia through the colonial process.⁴⁹ Alonso was traveling from Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, and landed on Cabo de la Vela, which is a beach strip on the eastern tip of the country, near La Guajira. Following Ojeda’s tour of the Guajira Peninsula, Rodrigo de Bastidas visited the same beaches in 1500.⁵⁰ The Spanish did not begin to colonize Colombia and Venezuela until

⁴⁶ Area Handbook of the US Library of Congress. n.d. “History of Colombia, The Spanish Conquest.” Mother Earth Travel. Accessed September 12, 2022. <http://motherearthtravel.com/history/colombia/history-3.htm>.

⁴⁷ Wesseling, Henk. n.d. “Imperialism & the roots of the Great War.” American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Accessed October 14, 2022. <https://www.amacad.org/publication/imperialism-roots-great-war>.

⁴⁸ “REINO DE TIERRA FIRME 1509 - 1513.” n.d. EVOLUCIÓN HISTÓRICA DE LAS FRONTERAS DE COLOMBIA - Proceso histórico del Estado Colombiano: Conquista y Colonia. Accessed October 14, 2022. https://www.sogeocol.edu.co/Ova/fronteras_evolucion/proceso/conquista_reino.html.

⁴⁹ “Colombia profile - Timeline.” 2018. BBC. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-19390164>.

⁵⁰ Chasteen, John C. 2016. *Born in Blood & Fire: A Concise History of Latin America*. N.p.: W.W. Norton.

1510, but the myth of El Dorado and the city of gold began to take root after Oreja's first visit to Colombia's shores.⁵¹ This incentivized political and apolitical factors to return to the land in search of a city that did not exist, effectively trapping Colombia in a perpetual state of being imperialized or needing to be imperialized, and creating the concept of magical realism as inseparable from Colombia itself.

In 1510, Oreja established the first Spanish colony of Santa María la Antigua de Darién, now called Acandí.⁵² In 1525, Bastidas founded Santa Marta.⁵³ Most notably, and often considered the *real* beginning of colonization in modern-day Colombia was the settlement of Cartagena, which was founded by Pedro de Heredia, another Spanish explorer, in the year 1535.⁵⁴ The colonization and installation of the port city created a safe haven against Indigenous rebel groups and allowed transcontinental trade to begin, foreshadowing the incoming slave trade and Indigenous genocide that was slowly beginning.

In 1550, the Real Audiencia in Santa Fe was formed, which operated as a sub-government under the Spanish Empire and ruled over New Granada, or represents modern-day Colombia. The Spanish Empire established a racial hierarchy within the nation that became integral to the Colombian

⁵¹ Legrand, Catherine. 1989. "COLONIZATION AND VIOLENCE IN COLOMBIA: PERSPECTIVES AND DEBATES." *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies / Revue canadienne des études latino-américaines et caraïbes* 14 (28): 5-29. JSTOR.

⁵² Britannica Staff. n.d. "Santa María de la Antigua del Darién | Spanish settlement, Panama." Encyclopedia Britannica. Accessed October 14, 2022.

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Santa-Maria-de-la-Antigua-del-Darien>.

⁵³ "Santa Marta - Colombia - History." n.d. Santa Marta Colombia. Accessed October 14, 2022.

<https://www.santamartacolombia.com.co/santa-marta-history>.

⁵⁴ Ideal Education Group S.L. n.d. "Colonization of Colombia – Colombian History - don Quijote." Don Quijote. Accessed September 12, 2022.

<https://www.donquijote.org/colombian-culture/history/colonization-of-colombia/>.

caste system. This racial hierarchy would later help the United States culturally and socioeconomically intervene in the nation following Colombia's independence from Spain. Essentially, blood purity or proximity to European ancestry determined one's ranking in a colonial society (and still does in an oblivious postcolonial world). People of Spanish descent and Spanish birth ranked as elites and ran the local government.⁵⁵ Second, on the social hierarchy were *Criollos*, or people of Spanish descent who were born in the colonies instead of in Spain.⁵⁶ Notably, the *Criollos* would revolt against the Elites in the late 1800s but would ignore the possibility of liberation for lower castes. Third on the social caste were the *Mestizos*, or people who were a mix of Spanish and Indigenous.⁵⁷ The Indigenous genocide in Colombia had devastating consequences to Native livelihood, and in the year 1980, polls showed that Indigenous Colombians did not constitute more than 1 percent of the national population (Crow, 1992).⁵⁸ *Zambos* and Black Slaves, with *Zambo* referring to people of mixed Indigenous and Black ancestry, ranked at the bottom of the social hierarchy and were seen as the property of the Elites.⁵⁹ As the case studies will show, when western corporations would later come into Colombia and monopolize agricultural production and economic independence of the country, they would target

⁵⁵ Dueñas Vargas, Guiomar. 2015. *Of Love and Other Passions: Elites, Politics, and Family in Bogotá, Colombia, 1778-1870*. N.p.: University of New Mexico Press.

⁵⁶ Martinez, Maria E. PBS. "Social Order in the Spanish New World." When Worlds Collide. <https://inside.sfuhs.org/dept/history/Mexicoreader/Chapter3/Social%20Order%20in%20the%20Spanish%20New%20World.pdf>.

⁵⁷ Fernanda Olate Sierra, Maria. 2014. "We Are All the Same, We All Are Mestizos': Imagined Populations and Nations in Genetics Research in Colombia." *Science as Culture* 23 (2): 226-252.

⁵⁸ Crow, John Armstrong. *The Epic of Latin America*. Berkeley : University of California Press, 1992. <http://archive.org/details/epicoflatinameri00crow>.

⁵⁹ Johnson, Georgia D. n.d. "Zambo (the word), a definition." African American Registry. Accessed September 12, 2022. <https://aaregistry.org/story/zambo-the-word-a-definition/>.

those at the bottom of the colonial hierarchy to ensure international silence would be the response to crimes against humanity.

Colonial agricultural economic models were implanted, with emphasis on exports of sugar and tobacco through the use of slave labor, creating a model of profit for the colonizer at the expense and dehumanization of the colonized. By the 1700s, the Spanish Empire reoriented the economy to ensure the highest profit from agricultural production and exportation. Agricultural production was divided into two types of landholding; the *encomienda* and the *hacienda*.⁶⁰ While both systems of landholding were designed differently, they were both oppressive despite their intention of giving workers more rights. The colony of New Granada was geographically situated in a very isolated region; allowing the masters of the *encomiendas* and *haciendas* to torture their workers without accountability.⁶¹ In 1592, after decades of pushback emerging from Bartolome de las Casas's disdain for the mistreatment of Indigenous peoples⁶² and the subsequent pushback of Spanish Elites, the Spanish Empire created the *Resguardo*, which translates to an Indigenous reservation.⁶³ However, the conditions of the Indigenous population did not improve. In 1595, the Spanish Empire began paying Indigenous laborers a small amount of money in exchange for their work, although the amount of money was

⁶⁰ Lockhart, James. 1969. "Encomienda and Hacienda: The Evolution of the Great Estate in the Spanish Indies." *Hispanic American Historical Review* 49, no. 3 (August): 411-429. Duke University Press.

⁶¹ Bauer, Arnold J. 1979. "Rural Workers in Spanish America: Problems of Peonage and Oppression." *Hispanic American Historical Review* 59 (1): 34-63.

⁶² Casas, Bartolomé de l. 1992. *In defense of the Indians: the defense of the Most Reverend Lord, Don Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, of the Order of Preachers, late Bishop of Chiapa, against the persecutors and slanderers of the peoples of the New World discovered across the seas*. Edited by Stafford Poole. Translated by Stafford Poole. N.p.: Northern Illinois University Press.

⁶³ Delgado Castaño, Paula S. 2018. *Estado crítico de la propiedad rural colectiva en Colombia*. N.p.: Editorial Universidad del Rosario.

nothing compared to the amount of work they were expected to complete.⁶⁴ Many died of exhaustion or illness, a form of slow violence, which could be defined as a form of institutional violence “dispersed across time and space.”⁶⁵ When a government neglects to pay workers fairly and overworks them without adequate food, housing, or healthcare, any subsequent illness or death caused by this lack of care is a form of slow violence caused by direct colonialism.

In 1739, Bogotá was named the capital of New Granada.⁶⁶ The late 1700s witnessed the emergence of enlightenment, and collective notions of independence began to spread through the colonies.⁶⁷ When Napoleon Bonaparte unseated Charles IV and Ferdinand VII from the Spanish throne to place his brother Joseph Bonaparte on the throne, Napoleon adjusted the Spanish constitution to require that colonies held the same rights as their colonizer.⁶⁸ In 1810, Criollos in Colombia abused the power vacuum that Bonaparte’s ruling created and founded a Criollo council in Bogotá with self-established governing powers.⁶⁹ On July 20, 1810, the Elites and the Criollos were granted temporary independence from Spain, which marked the beginning of independence.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ Fals-Borda, Orlando. 1957. “Indian Congregations in the New Kingdom of Granada: Land Tenure Aspects, 1595-1850.” *The Americas* 13, no. 4 (April): 331-351. JSTOR.

⁶⁵ Davies, Thom. 2019. “Slow violence and toxic geographies: ‘Out of sight’ to whom?” *SAGE Journals*, (April).

⁶⁶ The History Files Staff. n.d. “American Colonies - New Granada.” The History Files. Accessed October 14, 2022. <https://www.historyfiles.co.uk/KingListsAmericas/SouthColombia.htm>.

⁶⁷ MacFarlane, Anthony. 1998. “Identity, Enlightenment and Political Dissent in Late Colonial Spanish America.” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 8:309-335. JSTOR.

⁶⁸ ANTH461. 2020. “Of Economic Interest: Colombia’s Colonial Past and Recent Present – ANTH 461: Colonialism and Postcolonialism.” ANTH 461: Colonialism and Postcolonialism. <https://anth461.web.unc.edu/2020/04/of-economic-interest-colombias-colonial-past-and-recent-present/>.

⁶⁹ Blaufarb, Rafe. 2007. “The Western Question: The Geopolitics of Latin American Independence.” *The American Historical Review*, 112, no. 3 (June): 742-763. Oxford University Press on behalf of the American Historical Association.

⁷⁰ Chicago Tribune. 1991. “On July 20, 1810, Colombia declared its... – Chicago Tribune.” Chicago Tribune. <https://www.chicagotribune.com/ct-xpm-1991-07-20-9103210203-story.html>.

However, it was not until 1811 that the council of New Granada declared total independence from the Spanish Empire.⁷¹

A series of civil wars resulted in the Spanish re-conquering of the region in 1810, and Simon Bolívar led the rebel efforts until 1819 when the Congress of Angostura created what was called the Republic of Colombia with Simón Bolívar as president.⁷² The Republic of Colombia included modern-day Colombia as well as parts of modern-day Panama, Venezuela, and Ecuador. It is important to note that slavery was not yet abolished in the Republic of Colombia at this time.⁷³

1819-1922: Post Monroe Doctrine

Simón Bolívar, or El Libertador, was the leader of New Granada when it became Gran Colombia after liberation from the Spaniards following many years of civil war in 1821.⁷⁴ Although he was widely admired for his revolutionary idealism, many people pushed back against Gran Colombia and instead favored the idea of separate nation-states.⁷⁵ Bolívar's model of Gran Colombia was based on the United States of America. In 1831, Gran Colombia has broken apart into Ecuador, Venezuela, and Colombia, which at the time included both present-day Colombia and Panama.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Bushnell, David. 1993. *The making of modern Colombia : a nation in spite of itself*. N.p.: University of California Press.

⁷² Bowman, Charles H. "Manuel Torres in Philadelphia and the Recognition of Colombian Independence, 1821-1822." *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 80, no. 1 (1969): 17–38. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44210719>.

⁷³ McFarlane, Anthony. 2014. *War and Independence in Spanish America*. N.p.: Routledge.

⁷⁴ Barbosa Delgado, Francisco R. 2013. *Del derecho de gentes al derecho humanitario en Colombia, 1821-1995: debate sobre una idea constitucional*. N.p.: Universidad Externado de Colombia, Instituto de Estudios Constitucionales Carlos Restrepo Piedrahita.

⁷⁵ Biography.com Staff. 2014. "Simón Bolívar - Accomplishments, Facts & Death - Biography." Biography (Bio.). <https://www.biography.com/political-figure/simon-bolivar>.

⁷⁶ PBS.org. n.d. "Map: American Expansion - U.S.A. and Gran Colombia | The Killer Apps | Civilization: The West and the Rest with Niall Ferguson." PBS. Accessed September 12, 2022.

At the same time as the separation of Gran Colombia and the creation of new nation-states, James Monroe was preparing the Monroe Doctrine, the official U.S. policy that dictated that European nations must retreat from the western hemisphere and leave the “puppet monarchs,” or the new colonies founded by the Spanish Empire, to the United States.⁷⁷ Written in 1823, the Monroe Doctrine acts as a predecessor to all foreign policy in Latin America, as it claims colonial possession over the entire region.⁷⁸ It allows the United States to intervene in Latin American affairs, elections, and economies. While anti-colonist sentiments may have driven the creation of the Monroe Doctrine, the desire to profit fully off labor and natural resources in Latin America acted as the driving force behind James Monroe and John Quincy Adams’s creation of the Doctrine.⁷⁹

In 1904, Theodore Roosevelt added what became known as the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine. The Roosevelt Corollary stipulated the United States would always have the right to intervene in Latin American affairs, acting as what was called an “international policing power” (“Monroe Doctrine (1823) | National Archives” 2022).⁸⁰ It is deeply troubling to observe this phrase while equipped with historical context, mainly because the concept of policing is reliant on the definition of criminality or wrongdoing. In declaring the United States the policing power of the world, Roosevelt contended that the biases that plague standards of criminality in the United States

<https://www.pbs.org/wnet/civilization-west-and-rest/killer-apps/property/map-american-expansion-u-s-a-and-gran-colombia/>.

⁷⁷ Sexton, Jay. 2012. *The Monroe Doctrine: Empire and Nation in Nineteenth-Century America*. N.p.: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

⁷⁸ Hamilton, Robert M. 2016. *The Monroe Doctrine: The Birth of American Foreign Policy*. N.p.: PowerKids Press.

⁷⁹ “Milestones: 1801–1829.” n.d. Office of the Historian. Accessed September 12, 2022.

<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1801-1829/monroe>.

⁸⁰ “Monroe Doctrine (1823) | National Archives.” 2022. National Archives | <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/monroe-doctrine>.

would be pushed onto the Other' in the form of policing. At a time when Jim Crow laws were very much intact in the United States, the self-assignment of international policing would go on to have devastating impacts.⁸¹ When considering the linkage between the United States government and American corporations, this indirectly gives corporations the power and authority to police their foreign employees as well, which is highly relevant to the case studies of the United Fruit Company and Coca-Cola.

The Office of the Historian describes the Panama Canal as “the realization of a long-term United States goal—a trans-isthmian canal” (De Lesseps, n.d.).⁸² Essentially, a re-conceptualization and re-configuration of geography as dictated by the United States government. The Roosevelt Corollary created an international hierarchy in the western hemisphere where the United States could simply decide to divide Colombia into two separate pieces of land to boost their economy through the establishment of new trade routes.⁸³ Colombian politics, or the politics of the colonized “Other”, revolve around the needs and wants of the colonizer; a theme that begins to fully emerge here through what could be described as modern U.S. Interventionism.⁸⁴ In 1902, the U.S. Congress voted to build the Canal after a failed attempt by the French government.⁸⁵ The Colombian Prime Minister at the time, Tomás Herán, agreed to the construction of the Canal, but the Colombian Congress rejected it

⁸¹ History Staff. 2022. “Jim Crow Laws: Definition, Facts & Timeline - HISTORY.” History Channel. <https://www.history.com/topics/early-20th-century-us/jim-crow-laws>.

⁸² De Lesseps, Ferdinand. n.d. “Milestones: 1899–1913.” Milestones: 1899–1913 - Office of the Historian. Accessed September 12, 2022. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1899-1913/panama-canal>.

⁸³ Balf, Todd. 2003. *The Darkest Jungle: The True Story of the Darien Expedition and America's Ill-Fated Race to Connect the Seas*. N.p.: Crown Publishers.

⁸⁴ Coyne, Christopher J. 2022. *In Search of Monsters to Destroy: The Folly of American Empire and the Paths to Peace*. N.p.: Independent Institute.

⁸⁵ Aldana, Abelardo. 2013. *The Panama Canal Question a Plea for Colombia*. N.p.: BiblioLife.

due to the unequal financial conditions surrounding the construction of the Canal and the designation of the United States as the top profiting nation along the trade routes.⁸⁶

In response to the rejection of the treaty, Roosevelt sent troops to Panama and by 1903, the nation-state of Panama declared independence from Colombia with the help of the U.S. Military.⁸⁷ The Republic of Panama, with the full guidance of the United States military, named French engineer Philippe Bunau-Varilla leader of the country. Bunau-Varilla oversaw the 1903 Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty,⁸⁸ which excluded Colombia from the financial profit of construction and use of the Canal. The United States acquired ten miles of the Canal, and Panama received USD 10 million.⁸⁹ Notably, the United States led the creation of Panama and appointed a French leader of a Central American nation-state all as a part of the Big Stick metaphor, where western control over the developing world was seen as a political necessity in capitalist, colonial countries.⁹⁰ Colombia was excluded from the construction of the Canal and the U.S. military remained close enough to ensure the Colombian government would not stop the US expansion mission in the region. This proves that violence in postcolonial Colombia is transhistorical, as Colombians have long understood that to fight the oppressor is to expect physically and economically violent retaliation.

⁸⁶ The Constitution Center. 2021. "After a century, the Panama Canal still symbolizes executive power | The National Constitution Center." National Constitution Center. <https://constitutioncenter.org/blog/the-panama-canal-still-symbolizes-executive-power>.

⁸⁷ Balf, Todd. 2003. *The Darkest Jungle: The True Story of the Darien Expedition and America's Ill-Fated Race to Connect the Seas*. N.p.: Crown Publishers.

⁸⁸ Britannica. n.d. "Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty | United States-Panama [1903]." Britannica. Accessed September 12, 2022. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Hay-Bunau-Varilla-Treaty>.

⁸⁹ de Lesseps, Ferdinand. n.d. "Milestones: 1899-1913." Milestones: 1899-1913 - Office of the Historian. Accessed September 12, 2022. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1899-1913/panama-canal>.

⁹⁰ Gonzalez Valencia, Jose Maria. 2013. *Separation of Panama from Colombia: Refutation of the Misstatements and Erroneous Conception of Mr. Roosevelt in His Article Entitled the Panama Bla*. N.p.: HardPress.

Case Studies: The United Fruit Company and Coca-Cola

Disposability is a colonial cycle that continues into the modern world,⁹¹ as Escobar's writing stipulates in the literature review. The United Fruit Company, and later, Coca-Cola will serve as examples of how disposability and colonial exploitation manifest in a postmodern world. Companies replicate colonial models of occupation, colonial models of exploitation, and colonial models of repression, assassination, and removal.⁹²

Geographically, colonial occupation is coastal. The evidence will show that the Zona Bananera established by the United Fruit Company in Colombia replicates colonial sites of naval disembarkment and occupation. Likewise, Coca-Cola has decisively set-up their factories in the same sites that historically represent the physical manifestations of violence and exploitation that accompany coloniality. Beyond the geopolitical notions of replicating colonialism,⁹³ these companies use sub-contractors and the same methodologies⁹⁴ of repressing and forcing laborers to complete work in inadequate conditions, whether that be through forced labor, slavery, or assassination. Ultimately, the evidence presented in the case studies will prove that western corporations replicate colonialism

⁹¹ Boatcă, Manuela. "Coloniality of Labor in the Global Periphery: Latin America and Eastern Europe in the World-System." *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 36, no. 3-4 (2013): 287-314. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/90000019>.

⁹² Prasad, Pradhan H. "Dynamics of Neo-Colonial Exploitation." *Economic and Political Weekly* 31, no. 12 (1996): 719-22. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4403934>.

⁹³ Mignolo, Walter D. "Decoloniality and Phenomenology: The Geopolitics of Knowing and Epistemic/Ontological Colonial Differences." *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 32, no. 3 (2018): 360-87. <https://doi.org/10.5325/jspecphil.32.3.0360>.

⁹⁴ Chaloult, Norma Beatriz, and Yves Chaloult. "THE INTERNAL COLONIALISM CONCEPT: METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS." *Social and Economic Studies* 28, no. 4 (1979): 85-99. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27861779>.

through the extraction of work from laborers in unjust conditions, where the result remains the same: laborers in countries deemed Other remain disposable and dehumanized.

Case Study: The United Fruit Company and Chiquita Inc.

Establishment of the United Fruit Company

The origins of the United Fruit Company begin in 1866 when Captain Carl B. Frank brought bananas from Colonial Panama to New York and realized that there was potential for a new agricultural market sector if Americans were willing to buy the product.⁹⁵ However, for ten years bananas remained an afterthought, only brought onto cargo ships if there was enough extra space to import them. In 1876, ten-cent bananas were sold at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of American Independence.⁹⁶ They were later sold by Captain Lorenzo Dow Baker in New Jersey for USD 2. These sales prompted an explosion in popularity among the American consumer.⁹⁷ This prompted a mass explosion in popularity among the American consumer.⁹⁸

The *Telegraph* ship, captained by Lorenzo Dow Baker, began selling bananas to Andrew Preston, a merchant in Boston, Massachusetts.⁹⁹ The two formed the Boston Fruit Company and owed much of their success to their White Fleet, which was the largest privately owned fleet at the time.¹⁰⁰ At first, the Boston Fruit Company operated solely as a transportation company and profited

⁹⁵ Chapman, Peter. 2007. *Bananas: How the United Fruit Company Shaped the World*. N.p.: Canongate.

⁹⁶ McCann, Thomas P. 1976. *An American Company: The Tragedy of United Fruit*. Edited by Henry Scammell. N.p.: Crown Publishers.

⁹⁷ Trimmer, Clinton. 2004. "United Fruit Company: The Banana Empire." Digital Commons @ WOU. <https://digitalcommons.wou.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1340&context=his>.

⁹⁸ "A World of Bananas!" *Spore*, no. 74 (1998): 3–5. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24342496>.

⁹⁹ Brungardt, Maurice P. "LA UNITED FRUIT COMPANY EN COLOMBIA." *Innovar: Revista de Ciencias Administrativas y Sociales*, no. 5 (1995): 107–18. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23740804>.

¹⁰⁰ Guevara, Miguel. 2021. "The History and Impact of the United Fruit Company in Costa Rica." *Grow Jungles*. <https://growjungles.com/united-fruit-company-in-costa-rica/>.

off banana exportation and importation from Central and South America into the United States.

Baker and Preston eventually decided to monopolize the entire banana industry, though, and expand the business into the countries that grew bananas.¹⁰¹ This decision led them to collaborate with Minor Keith, who owned a railroad system that stretched through Central America and Colombia (before the construction of the Panama Canal).¹⁰² Keith also owned three banana companies that invaded Panama, Costa Rica, and Colombia. The three men decided to name their new company the United Fruit Company, which is shortened to the U.F.C. at times.

The United Fruit Company was formed in 1899 and by 1910, held an estimated value of USD 6 million, which with inflation is about USD 187 million.¹⁰³ Called “El Pulpo”¹⁰⁴ due to local commentary on the grip that the United Fruit Company seemed to have on everything, including livelihood¹⁰⁵ and labor rights. In 1899, the Colombian government was categorized as being in a state of neglect in certain regions, particularly regions with a high influx of Indigenous or Black Colombians.¹⁰⁶ Slavery had been slowly eradicated after a change to the constitution in 1821, but many

¹⁰¹Lauck, Jon. “American Agriculture and the Problem of Monopoly.” *Agricultural History* 70, no. 2 (1996): 196–215. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3744533>.

¹⁰² Historical Society Staff. n.d. “United Fruit Company - Minor Cooper Keith.” United Fruit Historical Society. Accessed October 14, 2022. <https://www.unitedfruit.org/keith.htm>.

¹⁰³ Trimmer, Clinton. 2004. “United Fruit Company: The Banana Empire.” Digital Commons @ WOU. <https://digitalcommons.wou.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1340&context=his>.

¹⁰⁴ McCann, Thomas P. 1976. *An American Company: The Tragedy of United Fruit*. Edited by Henry Scammell. N.p.: Crown Publishers.

¹⁰⁵ Livelihood, a generic term that encompasses many idealizations of human well-being, refers here to the following: a good economy, access to education, housing, healthcare, and voice in politics.

¹⁰⁶ Jimenez, Leonardo R. 2015. “Slavery, racism and manumission in Colombia (1821-1851).” *Revista Analisis Internacional* 6, no. 1 (Junio): 73-93. RAI.

historians argue that slavery was only abolished in the governmental or institutional sense in 1856.¹⁰⁷

The post-slavery sense of disruption and unknowing that plagued the time created a power vacuum where the Colombian government neglected to create order or establish a sense of security in their citizens. Many emancipated Colombians were still suffering the long-term psychological effects of slavery¹⁰⁸ and were also unemployed and therefore economically struggling. United Fruit Company manipulated the conditions of a high percentage of unemployment and the power vacuum and became a main source of employment in the area.

Establishing themselves as the main employer in most agriculturally rural parts of Colombia, the United Fruit Company also began to create urban centers that had seemingly adequate infrastructure, attracting many homeless emancipated previously enslaved Africans who were looking for fair work and wages.¹⁰⁹ Positioning themselves as a transglobal corporation, the United Fruit Company attracted many underprivileged Colombian workers who did not know or had never experienced fair working conditions. This allowed them to effectively manipulate and exploit workers, who at first could not identify themselves as oppressed due to their newfound false sense of freedom. In Colombia, the United Fruit Company built their worker sites and transportation lines,¹¹⁰ in what was seemingly disguised as a helpful technique but represented another form of policing the

¹⁰⁷ Lohse, Russel. 2001. "Reconciling Freedom with the Rights of Property: Slave Emancipation in Colombia, 1821-1852, with Special Reference to La Plata." *The Journal of Negro History* 86, no. 3 (Summer). The University of Chicago Press Journals.

¹⁰⁸ Halloran, Michael J. 2019. "African American Health and Posttraumatic Slave Syndrome: A Terror Management Theory Accounts." *Journal of Black Studies* 50 (45-65). SAGE Journals.

¹⁰⁹ Bucheli, Marcelo. 2004. "Enforcing Business Contracts in South America: The United Fruit Company and Colombian Banana Planters in the Twentieth Century." *The Business History Review* 78, no. 2 (Summer): 181-212. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25096865>.

¹¹⁰ Bucheli, Marcelo. 2005. *Bananas and Business: The United Fruit Company in Colombia, 1899-2000*. N.p.: NYU Press.

workers.¹¹¹ Low wages and violent working conditions plagued the worker experience, and the creation of urban centers for workers and their families to reside in resulted in an environment designed to conceal crimes against humanity.

Violation and the Banana Massacre

Western corporations and the western lens view Colombian bodies as inherently disposable. Recognizing the fragility of the Colombian laborer in a post-emancipation society in disorder, the United Fruit Company *chose* to manipulate and monopolize the disorder of the time. In an imperialist, and capitalist society, the main concern of the United Fruit Company was profit, regardless of the oppression or harm that had to be done to laborers to ensure that profits were maximized.

The history of the United Fruit Company on Colombian soil is bloody. Up to the 1920s, UFC's workforce was almost 20% Colombian laborers, employed in the Zona Bananera,¹¹² which ran along the Northern Coast of Colombia, known also for its poverty due to the impact of the slave trade and the Indigenous genocide committed earlier by the Spanish Empire in the region.¹¹³ The United Fruit company avoided compliance with Colombian labor laws by sub-contracting local employers to employ the immediate workers, ensuring that UFC could deny any responsibility when it came to worker abuse claims by deferring blame to the local sub-contractors.¹¹⁴ Colombian labor laws also stipulated that workers had the right to benefits such as health insurance, pension, and paid leave,

¹¹¹ Sinclair, Georgina. 2010. *At the End of the Line: Colonial Policing and the Imperial Endgame 1945-80*. N.p.: Manchester University Press.

¹¹² Asturias, Miguel A. 2016. *El Papa Verde*. N.p.: Drácena.

¹¹³ Jorge Enrique Elias Caro. n.d. "The worker's massacre of 1928 in the Magdalena Zona Bananera - Colombia. An unfinished story." SciELO Colombia. Accessed September 27, 2022.

http://www.scielo.org.co/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1794-88862012000300003.

¹¹⁴ Bucheli, Marcelo. 2013. *Después de la hojarasca: United Fruit Company en Colombia, 1899-2000*. Translated by María M. Andrade. N.p.: Universidad de los Andes, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Departamento de Historia

which UFC used the sub-contractors to avoid providing workers with any of the above.¹¹⁵ The United Fruit Company also did not provide education to the children of workers,¹¹⁶ despite being the very designers of many urban centers to provide workers with what they described as an adequate community.

In the build-up to the Colombian Banana Massacre, which is now regarded as a turning point in the collective history of the country, United Fruit Company employees began to demand better conditions for anyone working or living under the rule of “El Pulpo,” or the U.F.C. They demanded that hospitals be built and that compensation and healthcare for worker’s injuries be covered by the United Fruit Company.¹¹⁷ The urban centers, which were referred to as “plantations” by locals, were also said to be unlivable and it was argued that conditions had to improve if work was to continue.

In 1928, Colombian laborers went on strike to protest their unfair working conditions.¹¹⁸ The five leaders of the workers’ movement wrote a memo titled Assembly of the Workers Union, where they listed their requirements to continue work.¹¹⁹ The requirements included: insurance, worker’s compensation for accidents, sanitation/hygienic infrastructure, Sundays off from work, a 50% increase

¹¹⁵ Bucheli, Marcelo. 2004. “Enforcing Business Contracts in South America: The United Fruit Company and Colombian Banana Planters in the Twentieth Century.” *The Business History Review* 78, no. 2 (Summer): 181-212. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25096865>.

¹¹⁶ Plaza Lasso, Galo, and Stacy May. 2015. *The United Fruit Company in Latin America*. N.p.: Creative Media Partners, LLC.

¹¹⁷ House of Representatives. n.d. “- EXAMINING WORKERS’ RIGHTS AND VIOLENCE AGAINST LABOR UNION LEADERS IN COLOMBIA.” GovInfo. Accessed October 14, 2022. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-111hrg47097/html/CHRG-111hrg47097.htm>.

¹¹⁸ Jorge Enrique Elias Caro. n.d. “The worker’s massacre of 1928 in the Magdalena Zona Bananera - Colombia. An unfinished story.” SciELO Colombia. Accessed September 27, 2022.

¹¹⁹ U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR Bureau of International Labor Affairs. n.d. “Colombia Labor Rights Report.” U.S. Department of Labor. Accessed October 14, 2022. https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/research_file_attachment/ColombiaLaborRights.pdf.

in pay for workers who earned less than 100 Colombian pesos monthly, weekly pay, abolition of loans, abolition of subcontractors, and improved infrastructure to hospitals.¹²⁰ These terms were not approved by the United Fruit Company, and so the workers in the Zona Bananera went on strike.¹²¹ In reaction, the Colombian government declared this zone a military zone, and the United States government stepped in as well.

The United Fruit Company had western media outlets reporting on the event, labeling the protesters as communists that needed to be stopped by the United States, the self-proclaimed voice of capitalism. The United States military stationed the Marine Corps on Colombian shores in a form of psychological warfare intended to use the *threat* of violence to force the workers into obedience. The Colombian government and the U.S. Ambassador at the time, Jefferson Caffery, worked together to privately contract Colombian guerilla groups to massacre the protestors.¹²² The Colombian and the United States government's decisions to assassinate workers and involve themselves with the United Fruit Company serve as a public indication that when western corporations re-colonize land and people, the United States is always indirectly and directly responsible. I argue here that Western corporations and the United States government are entangled figures of modern re-colonization, and maintain power and control over Colombia in a way similar to that practiced by the Spanish Empire in the era of direct colonialism. Rather than observing Colombia as an independent nation worthy of

¹²⁰ Amelinckx, Andrew. 2014. "Old Time Farm Crime: The Banana Massacre." Modern Farmer. <https://modernfarmer.com/2014/07/latest-old-time-farm-crime-banana-massacre/>.

¹²¹ All notes on the political strategizing of the Banana Massacre can be credited to: Jorge Enrique Elias Caro. n.d. "The worker's massacre of 1928 in the Magdalena Zona Bananera - Colombia. An unfinished story." SciELO Colombia. Accessed September 27, 2022. http://www.scielo.org.co/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1794-88862012000300003.

¹²² Harvard Library. n.d. "United Fruit Company Photograph Collection." Hollis for Archival Discovery.

agency, the United Fruit Company only saw an economical banana harvest and the cheap labor they were able to exploit. The existence of the Roosevelt corollary to the Monroe Doctrine corroborates this disposability that Colombian laborers possess as Others in the eyes of the west.¹²³

Evidence of Corporate and Governmental Entanglements

One crucial piece of evidence in understanding the entanglement of the United States government, the United Fruit Company, and the Colombian government's collaboration with guerilla groups to complete the Banana Massacre can be found in three documents in the Harvard Library.¹²⁴

Figure 1 contains a memo from the United Fruit Company documenting the names of the five workers who began the unionizing movement and reveals that these men were not only being surveilled but were targeted for removal based on the company's determination that they are "dangerous" by the very company that they sought economic liberation from. **Figure 2** contains a memo from Jefferson Caffrey, the United States ambassador to Colombia during the massacre, where he wrote to the Secretary of State to inform him of the massacre and to express that he has the "honor" of informing him that the United States military ..., indicating that Colombian death is not a concern of the United States government. Since the United States military was involved in the oppression and the assassination of than more one-thousand people, here we are left wondering what honor exactly he speaks of. Finally, **Figure 3** is an image of the five men deemed dangerous and removable by the United Fruit Company. Upon close inspection, it can be seen that the two men who died or were checked off in **Figure 1** have the word "out" written on their bodies.

¹²³Mathews, John M. "Roosevelt's Latin-American Policy." *The American Political Science Review* 29, no. 5 (1935): 805–20. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1947224>.

¹²⁴ Harvard Library. n.d. "United Fruit Company Photograph Collection." Hollis for Archival Discovery.

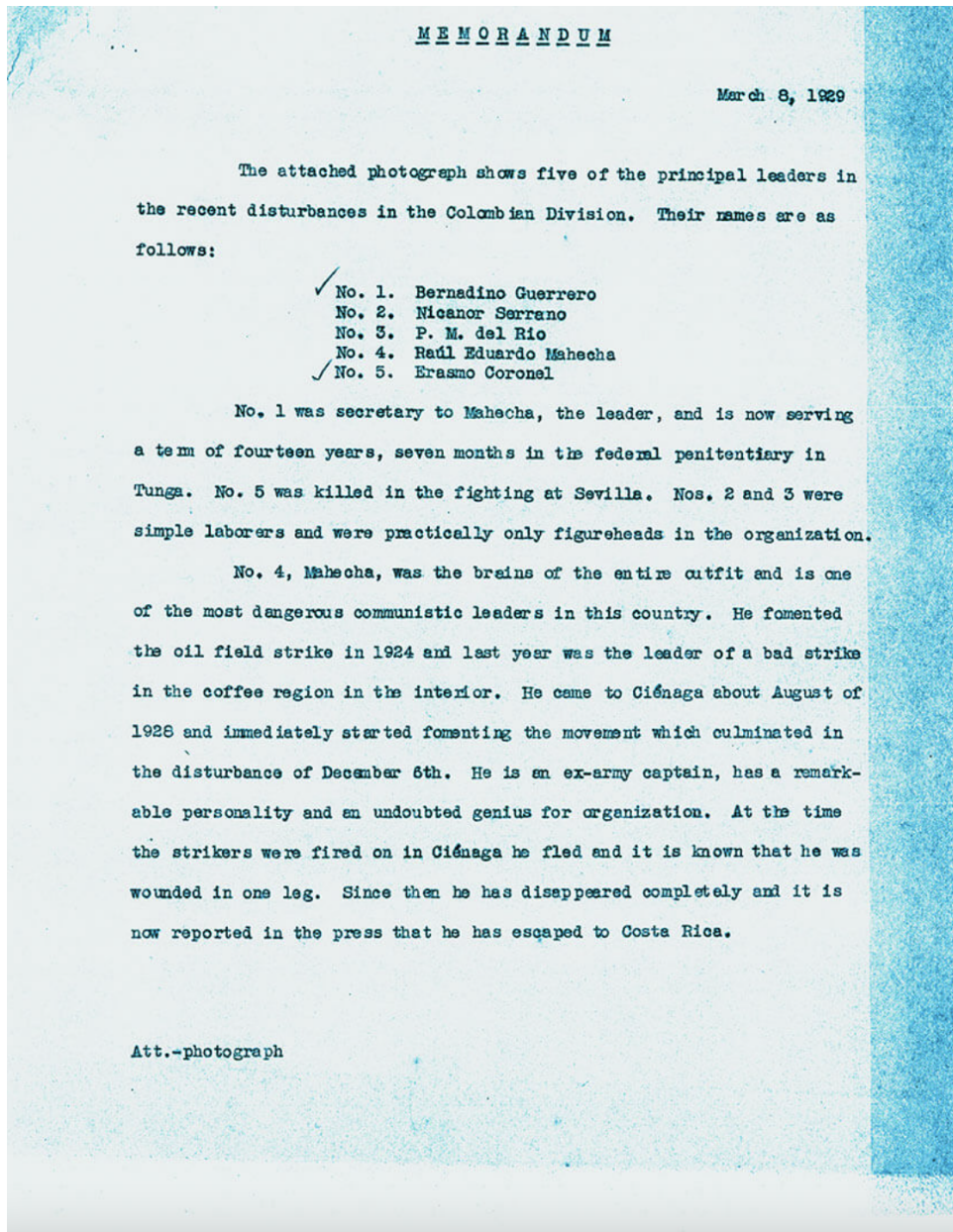


Figure 1. United Fruit Company memo dated March 8, 1928. The two men with a checkmark next to their names were assassinated by guerilla groups. *Courtesy of the Visualizing the Americas Collection, University of Toronto Mississauga.*¹²⁵

¹²⁵ University of Toronto. n.d. "1928 Massacre - Visualizing the Americas." Visualizing the Americas. Accessed September 27, 2022. <https://visualizingtheamericas.utm.utoronto.ca/key-moments/1928-massacre/>.

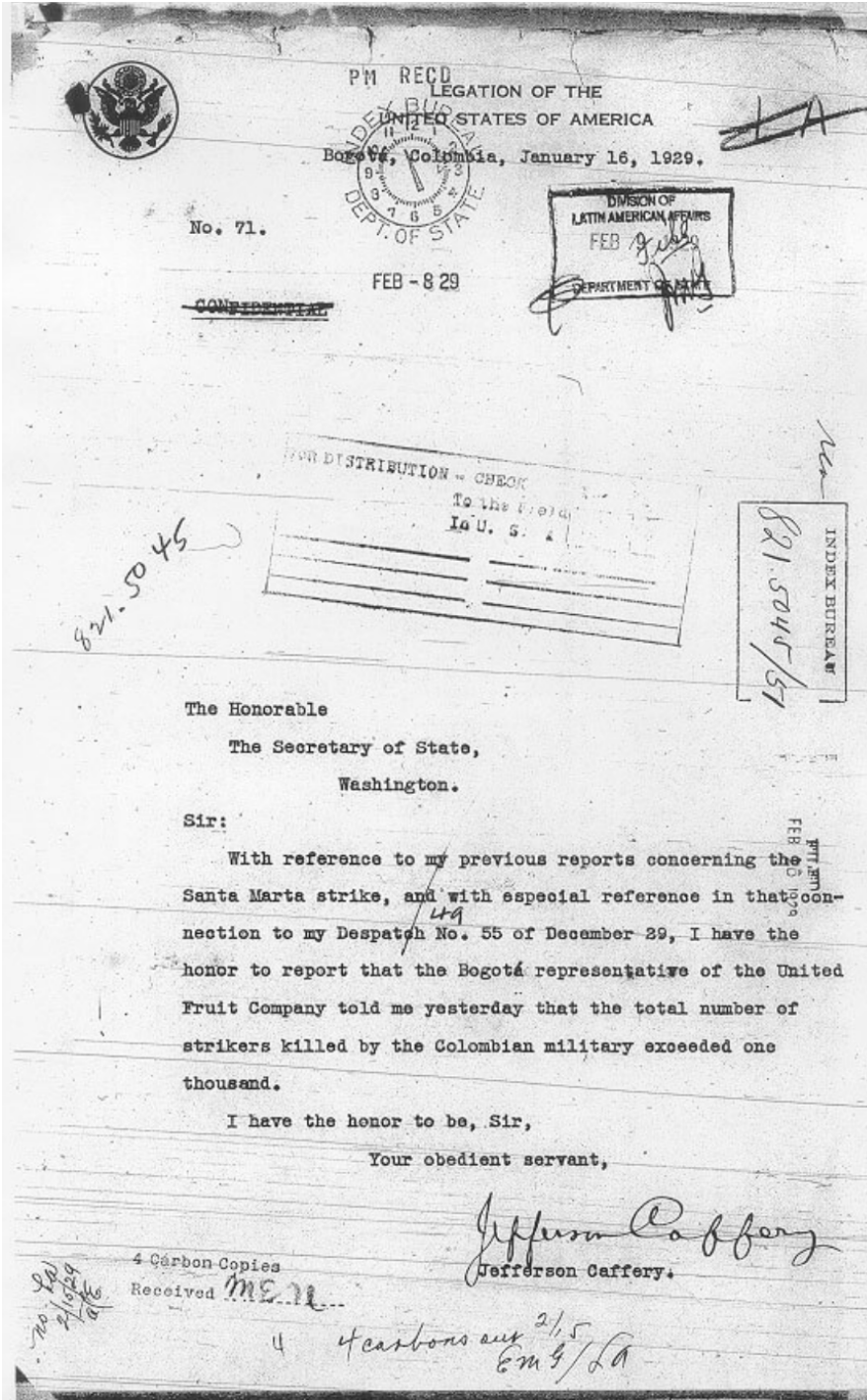


Figure 2. Memo from Jefferson Caffrey to Secretary of the State. Dated February 8, 1929. ¹²⁶

Honor is mentioned twice in this historical note. *Courtesy of Fidel Peña.*

¹²⁶ Peña, Fidel. n.d. "Essay Analyzing a Photograph." Kevin Coleman. Accessed September 27, 2022. <https://kevincoleman.org/the-1928-massacre-of-banana-workers/>.



Figure 3. An image of the five men that began the unionizing movement that later led to the Banana Massacre, annotated by officials in the United Fruit Company. The men with the handwritten scrawl “out” over the bodies are Bernadino Guerrero and Eramo Coronel, also listed in **Figure 1**. The phrasing and positioning of the scrawl indicate that they have been eliminated as a threat to the United Fruit Company. *Courtesy of the Visualizing the Americas Collection, University of Toronto*

*Mississauga.*¹²⁷

Over one thousand soldiers were massacred and the United Fruit Company continued to oppress and violate workers throughout Colombia.¹²⁸ The Banana Massacre established the United Fruit Company as an imperialist western corporation on foreign soil and it represents the beginnings of

¹²⁷ University of Toronto. n.d. “1928 Massacre - Visualizing the Americas.” *Visualizing the Americas*. Accessed September 27, 2022. <https://visualizingtheamericas.utm.utoronto.ca/key-moments/1928-massacre/>.

¹²⁸ Jorge Enrique Elias Caro. n.d. “The worker’s massacre of 1928 in the Magdalena Zona Bananera - Colombia. An unfinished story.” *SciELO Colombia*. Accessed September 27, 2022.

modern manifestations of colonialism and demonstrates how little agency Colombian laborers have in an economy that has never been under their control. Colombians inherit an inherent disposability in the eyes of their government, which is influenced by this same notion of disposability that is possessing the United States and the corporations that emerge from within it.



Figure 4.¹²⁹ Colombian artist Diego Riviera draws an anti-imperialist painting of the Banana Massacre. Dead Colombians are seen lying on the ground as Theodore Roosevelt and politicians representative of the Big Stick monopoly of the time are depicted shaking hands with the Colombian president. Corruption is explicitly alluded to. Notice how Roosevelt’s hand lingers threateningly on the bomb, personified with the face of evil. *Courtesy of Collecteurs.*

¹²⁹ Riviera, Diego. 1950. “Gloriosa Victoria,” oil on linen. In *Accessed provided by Collecteurs.*

Re-invention and Disguise: Chiquita Inc.

The United Fruit Company merged into Chiquita Inc. in 1990, after the U.S.-led Guatemalan Coup that was facilitated by the United Fruit Company.¹³⁰ In 2001, Chiquita Inc. filed for bankruptcy and effectively re-branded itself, cutting off ties to its dark history. However, a lawsuit filed in 2006 by Colombian laborers in a United States Florida Courtroom alleged that from 1996 to 2004, Chiquita Inc. was paying Colombian paramilitary groups such as A.U.C.¹³¹ to torture, kill, and “make disappear” laborers who did not comply with standards set by the larger corporation (Business and Human Rights Resource Center, n.d.).¹³² Chiquita Inc. pled guilty and paid the United States government USD 25 million.¹³³ Noticeably, the Colombian bodies directly affected by these crimes against humanity received no compensation beyond the written affirmation of guilt vis-à-vis the guilty plea. Again, this shows that both the United States government and United Fruit Company/Chiquita Inc. knowingly oppress and murder Colombian citizens, proving that they share the colonial gaze that only allows them to see Colombian bodies as disposable. This cycle of domination and subsequently corrupt reform mimics imperial models of inherent disposability, where all institutions involved chose

¹³⁰ Bucheli, Marcelo. 2004. “Enforcing Business Contracts in South America: The United Fruit Company and Colombian Banana Planters in the Twentieth Century.” *The Business History Review* 78, no. 2 (Summer): 181-212. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25096865>.

¹³¹ The A.U.C. refers to the right-wing paramilitary group called the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia, active from 1997-2006. They are involved in many assassinations of attempted unionizers in the country. Center for International Security and Cooperation. n.d. “MMP: The United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia, AUC.” Center for International Security and Cooperation. Accessed October 14, 2022. <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/united-self-defense-forces-colombia/>.

¹³² Business and Human Rights Resource Center. n.d. “Chiquita lawsuits (re Colombia, filed in USA by Colombian nationals).” Business & Human Rights Resource Centre. Accessed September 27, 2022. <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/chiquita-lawsuits-re-colombia/>.

¹³³ Department of Justice. 2007. “#07-161: 03-19-07 Chiquita Brands International Pleads Guilty to Making Payments to a Designated Terrorist Organization And Agrees to Pay \$25 Million Fine.” Department of Justice. https://www.justice.gov/archive/opa/pr/2007/March/07_nsd_161.html.

not to act in the interests of human rights for the sake of profit and compliance. The impact on the body of the Other is devastating, as a nation is forced to reckon with the trauma of its colonial past and postcolonial present. Ultimately, it proves that Colombian persons are not valuable unless an economic value can be extracted from within them by foreign corporations and institutions, at whatever the cost.

Case Study: Coca-Cola

Establishment of Coca-Cola

The history of Coca-Cola begins with Dr. John S. Pemberton, who invented the original recipe for modern soda as a cure for heartburn and nausea. Pemberton sold his patent to Asa G. Chandler, a businessman in Atlanta, GA. In 1898, Chandler incorporated the company name Coca-Cola. In 1919, Coca-Cola was sold to Ernest Woodruff, who globalized the product.¹³⁴

The original recipe for Coca-Cola was established before the Jones-Miller Narcotic Drugs Import and Export Act of 1922.¹³⁵ Coca leaves were used in the original recipe, and when the United States government began to propose policies regulating the import of experimental drugs into the country, the Coca-Cola Company was able to politically lobby with the United States government.¹³⁶ This lobbying was successful and resulted in an exemption being made for the corporation in the Act and in all future legislation regarding drug imports and pharmaceutical regulations.¹³⁷ As the Cold War approached and the divergence and following isolation of capitalism and communism arose,

¹³⁴ The history of the company Coca-Cola was found using the following source:

Yafai, Nabil. 2016. "History of Coca-Cola · InterExchange." InterExchange.

<https://www.interexchange.org/articles/career-training-usa/2016/03/08/history-coca-cola/>.

¹³⁵ Lvovsky, Jacob. n.d. "The Drug Enforcement Administration." DEA.gov. Accessed October 14, 2022.

<https://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2018-05/Early%20Years%20p%2012-29.pdf>.

¹³⁶ Hyland, Emilia, and Anthony Long. n.d. "Political Influence – Coca-Cola." Furman Blogs. Accessed September 27, 2022. <https://blogs.furman.edu/ehyland/history/political-influence/>.

¹³⁷ Elmore, Bartow J. 2016. *Citizen Coke: The Making Of Coca-Cola Capitalism*. N.p.: WW Norton.

Coca-Cola would also prove to be a close ally of the United States government.¹³⁸ A relationship between the two institutions upon the basis of mutual interest at the expense of the Other (in this case, the consumer or the worker), began.

Corporate Expansion and Imperial Terrorization

Coca-Cola expanded to Colombia in 1940 along the Northern Coast of Colombia, similar to the occupation tactics of the United Fruit Company which itself followed colonial patterns of European occupation.¹³⁹ Similar to the subcontracting tactics of the United Fruit Company, Coca-Cola used the Indega S.A. bottling company¹⁴⁰ to subcontract labor workers directly, which allowed them to defer any incoming accusations of human rights violations.¹⁴¹ Modeling themselves after previous imperialist corporations, who themselves were modeled after colonial constructions of occupation and exploitation, Coca-Cola effectively continued then and continues now the cycle of colonial disposability that was started with the first European foot set onto the coast of Colombia

The exposure of human rights violations by western corporation Coca-Cola in Colombia began when a lawsuit was filed in Southern Florida in 2002 by SINALTRAINAL, a labor union in

¹³⁸ Pappas, Ioannis. 2015. "Coca-Cola under the Aegis of US Government." *Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of: MA in History of Society, specialization Global History and International Relations*, (August). Erasmus University Rotterdam Erasmus School of History Culture and Communication.

¹³⁹ Bacon, David. 2002. "The Coca-Cola Killings:." *The American Prospect*.
<https://prospect.org/features/coca-cola-killings/>.

¹⁴⁰ Ciafone, Amanda. 2018. "Selling Local Modernization through the Global Corporation: Coca-Cola Bottling in Colombia, 1927-1944*." *Historia y Sociedad*.

¹⁴¹ Third World Network. n.d. "Coca-Cola and human rights in Colombia." *Third World Network (TWN)*. Accessed September 27, 2022. <https://www.twn.my/title2/resurgence/2014/290-291/human1.htm>.

Colombia.¹⁴² The lawsuit happened in Florida due to the Alien Tort Claims Act,¹⁴³ which states that United States companies can be sued for crimes that they have committed abroad in a United States courtroom. Generally:

The case is based on the intimidation, kidnapping, arrest and systematic murder of trade unionists in Colombia by the police and by para-military forces working for private corporations. The violent persecution of trade unionists in Colombia has been endemic and systematic in recent years. Over 3,800 trade unionists have been murdered since the Central Unitaria de Trabajadores de Colombia (CUT), the largest Colombian union federation, was formed in 1986. Of every five trade unionists murdered worldwide, three of them are Colombian (Mahecha 2002).¹⁴⁴

Coca-Cola was accused of contracting paramilitary groups to oppress and massacre any laborers working to unionize. Coca-Cola subcontracted the A.U.C. (a paramilitary group) to oppress and terrorize the Colombian population. In 2002 alone these operations resulted in 112 deaths and 68 Desaparecidos.¹⁴⁵ SINALTRAINAL wanted to call global attention to human rights violations committed by a western corporation. The lawsuit directly focused on one name, in particular, a trade union leader named Isidro Segundo Gil Gil, often shortened in media to Isidro Gil. He was murdered

¹⁴² PBS NEWS. n.d. "FRONTLINE/WORLD Fellows . Colombia: The Coca-Cola Controversy." FRONTLINE/WORLD Fellows . Colombia: The Coca-Cola Controversy . PBS. Accessed September 27, 2022. https://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/fellows/colombia0106/video_chapter4.html

¹⁴³ Windsor, Duane. 2022. "Alien Tort Claims Act | United States [1789] | Britannica." Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Alien-Tort-Claims-Act>.

¹⁴⁴ Mahecha, Pedro. 2002. "Coca-Cola taken to court." *International Union Rights* 9 (4): 32. International Centre for Trade Union Rights.

¹⁴⁵ Byrne, Matt. Dec., 2001 - Jan., 2002. "Coca-Cola Deaths." *Fortnight*, no. 401. JSTOR.

by A.U.C. at a Coca-Cola factory in Carepa, Colombia, in 1996.¹⁴⁶ The lawsuit states that Richard Kirby, who runs Bebida Colombia, a subunit of Coca-Cola that oversees distribution within the nation, directly ordered and paid for the assassination of Isidro Gil.¹⁴⁷ It also alleged that the Colombian government knew and did not do anything about it, making the entire Colombian government complicit in all paramilitary assassinations of Coca-Cola employees from the 1980s into the 2000s.¹⁴⁸ The lawsuit demanded that reparations be given to all families affected by the assassinations and that legislation be put into place to stop Coca-Cola's ability to commit such crimes since the International Criminal Court was not intervening nor was the United Nations.¹⁴⁹

Disposability and Labor Rights

When a western corporation such as Coca-Cola hires, pays, and contracts terrorist groups within the nation they are oppressing, a type of terror-on-terror emerges where the national terrorist is acting on behalf of a foreign terrorist. This double-edged violence, when enacted, has calamitous consequences. This is the juxtaposition itself: the United States is at once the employer, paying Colombian workers for their labor, but also the terrorist, killing union workers who speak out against workplace violations. What it ultimately reveals is the level of disregard for Colombian bodies when

¹⁴⁶ PBS NEWS. n.d. "FRONTLINE/WORLD Fellows . Colombia: The Coca-Cola Controversy." FRONTLINE/WORLD Fellows . Colombia: The Coca-Cola Controversy . PBS. Accessed September 27, 2022. https://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/fellows/colombia0106/video_chapter4.html

¹⁴⁷ "580 DARD. — Sinaltrainal v. Coca-Cola Co., No. 06-15851, 2009 WL 2431463 (11th Cir. Aug. 11, 2009). According to the Federal R." n.d. Harvard Law Review. Accessed October 14, 2022.

https://harvardlawreview.org/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/vol123_simaltrainal_v_cocacola.pdf.

¹⁴⁸ "BRIEF OF THE COCA-COLA COMPANY AS AMICUS CURIAE IN SUPPORT OF PETITIONERS." 2020. Supreme Court.

https://www.supremecourt.gov/DocketPDF/19/19-416/153290/20200908112820321_19-416%2019-453tsacCoca-ColaCompany.pdf.

¹⁴⁹Gill, L. (2007). 'Right There with You': Coca-Cola, Labor Restructuring and Political Violence in Colombia. *Critique of Anthropology*, 27(3), 235–260. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308275X07080354>

they are rebelling against any oppressive or violent force. When they present themselves as a corporate headache or inconvenience, Coca-Cola's response is to discard them or remove them, proving their ultimate state as disposable unless usable by imperialist, capitalist standards.



Figure 5. Antonio Caro, enamel on tin. Commentary on the meshed identity that emerges within bottling plants and the rural communities that surround them in Colombia. Western corporations such as Coca-Cola enforce an environment designed to defer worker's unions and trap employees in a state of circular or cyclic oppression, but trade unionizers seek to dispel and disillusion the workers that

come to falsely believe what this painting represents, the nonexistent common interest of the laborer and the corporation.¹⁵⁰

Coca-Cola would later be removed from the lawsuit, and the presiding judge would rename the defendants as the bottling companies, Bebida Colombia and Panamco.¹⁵¹ This is a failure to recognize the way that systemic oppression operates, and how western corporations use subcontractors to defer blame. In September 2006, the judge would dismiss all charges against the bottling companies. A retrial in 2011 would result in the same verdict.¹⁵² The United States government gave Coca-Cola a full pardon, a metaphorical pat on the back, for the assassination of hundreds of Colombian laborers who expressed any desire for worker's rights. When corporations are given political influence in an imperialist capitalist society, workers' rights will be violated and worker lives will be seen as discardable.

The entanglement of governments and corporations works actively against the literal lives of Colombian bodies. In an article analyzing the political-anthropological concerns of Coca-Cola, author Ravi Raman calls Coca-Cola an "oligarchic-corporate structure, the US-based Coca-Cola Company" (Raman 2007, 110).¹⁵³ The entanglement of western corporations and the United States government can be described as oligarchic, especially in the context of Coca-Cola, a company that has an extensive

¹⁵⁰ Antonio Caro, "Colombia Coca-Cola," *Blanton Museum of Art Collections*, accessed September 27, 2022, <https://utw10658.utweb.utexas.edu/items/show/2944>.

¹⁵¹ Brodzinsky, Sibylla. 2003. "Coca-Cola boycott launched after killings at Colombian plants." *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2003/jul/24/marketingandpr.colombia>.

¹⁵² "BRIEF OF THE COCA-COLA COMPANY AS AMICUS CURIAE IN SUPPORT OF PETITIONERS." 2020. Supreme Court. https://www.supremecourt.gov/DocketPDF/19/19-416/153290/20200908112820321_19-416%2019-453tsacCoca-ColaCompany.pdf.

¹⁵³ Raman, Ravi. 2007. "Community—Coca-Cola Interface: Political-Anthropological Concerns on Corporate Social Responsibility." *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Anthropology* 53, no. 3 (Winter): 103-120. JSTOR.

political history in the United States and a close relationship with Washington D.C.¹⁵⁴ As the legal battle continues between unionizing Colombians and the vast network of imperialist agents that oppress them, the same cycle continues to emerge where justice is continuously deferred.

In 2012, the European Center for Human Rights sent an inquiry to the International Criminal Court regarding the deaths of various Coca-Cola laborers in Colombia, including Isidro Segundo Gil Gil.¹⁵⁵ Twenty years after their deaths, justice was again deferred when the ICC failed to act. International agencies are often complicit with violations of human rights when they are committed by the powerful, and corporations such as Coca-Cola are considered some of the most enfranchised. In 2016, the Colombian government named Coca-Cola in a suit including fifty western corporations alleging that they had privately contracted paramilitary groups and provided funding to them, particularly in the 1990s (Chiquita Inc. was named in this same lawsuit). Still, though, no change in policy or worker's protections has been implemented, leaving Colombian bodies trapped in a state of disposability crafted by a nexus of postcolonial and imperial players all gambling on Colombian bodies for their own privatized purposes. When political and capitalist interests are aligned in economic profit, it does not matter at the expense of whom may this profit be earned. Coca-Cola, therefore, continues to replicate colonial patterns of economic exploitation, with a heightened emphasis on the colonial view of workers as replaceable and disposable.

¹⁵⁴ Pappas, Ioannis. 2015. "Coca-Cola under the Aegis of US Government." *Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of: MA in History of Society, specialization Global History and International Relations*, (August). Erasmus University Rotterdam Erasmus School of History Culture and Communication.

¹⁵⁵ All notes on the trials against mass conglomerate companies were sources from: Human Rights Council. 2014. "Human Rights Violations by Coca Cola in Colombia |." Cetim.ch. <https://www.cetim.ch/human-rights-violations-by-coca-cola-in-colombia/>.

Conclusion and Analysis

Colonialism is a cycle of oppression that reconfigures itself to accommodate modern notions of independence. A close examination of the history of the Colombian nation-state revealed that the Monroe Doctrine and subsequent Roosevelt Corollary created a power vacuum in the Global South. As the Spanish Colonial Empire left the region in response to the United States possessiveness of the area, Colombia became a site of contention for power. As colonialism is a process, this power vacuum mimicked a form of re-colonization as western corporations, such as the United Fruit Company and Coca-Cola, began to situate themselves within Colombian economics as both benefactor and oppressor. The result: Colombian bodies are seen as disposable based on colonial hierarchies of humans, where colonizers look down upon and disregard the personhood of the colonized.

The Monroe Doctrine stipulated that European nations had no place in the Global South as it was the unofficial territory of the United States. It allowed the United States to economically exploit the region under the guise of liberating the Global South from the Spanish Empire and acted as the predecessor to the Roosevelt Corollary. The Roosevelt Corollary, enacted in 1904, stated that it would always be the right of the United States to physically and economically intervene in Latin American affairs. These policies in the context of the colonial history of Colombia effectively continue the transhistorical colonial cycle of oppression, where Colombia is again seen only based on what can be extracted from it, at the erasure of any pretenses of individuality or independence.

Both the companies U.F.C. and Coca-Cola reaffirm this cycle of oppression. These companies took advantage of the power vacuum that emerged as a response to the Roosevelt Corollary and became some of the main sources of employment within Colombia. However, the cruelty and crimes

against humanity committed by both companies reveal that western corporations do view Colombian laborers as disposable.

Postcolonial bodies in a colonial world are always at the disposal of the powerful. The livelihood and personhood of laborers in postcolonial nations will never be valued the same as that of bodies that benefit from these systems of oppression, as Franz Fanon reminds the reader in his book *The Wretched of the Earth*.¹⁵⁶ Cycles of oppression and exploitation in Colombia are unending and without limit. Thousands of Colombians have been murdered at the behest of corrupt organizations. And the United States reminds us, as Jefferson Caffery wrote to the Secretary of State in 1929, it is their “honor to report” the deaths of so many.¹⁵⁷ There has never been accountability. These are not deaths but murders. It is for those taken and disappeared that the work continues.

¹⁵⁶ Fanon, Frantz. 2021. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Translated by Richard Philcox. N.p.: Grove Press.

¹⁵⁷ Peña, Fidel. n.d. “Essay Analyzing a Photograph.” Kevin Coleman. Accessed September 27, 2022. <https://kevincoleman.org/the-1928-massacre-of-banana-workers/>.

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<https://borgenproject.org/tag/global-south/>.
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https://www.supremecourt.gov/DocketPDF/19/19-416/153290/20200908112820321_19-416%2019-453tsacCoca-ColaCompany.pdf.

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Britannica Staff. n.d. “Martinique - History.” Britannica. Accessed October 14, 2022. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Martinique/History>.

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